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ABSTRACT

This manual describes "Check and Connect," a procedure to prevent high risk secondary students from dropping out of school. The purpose of the "check" component is to assess the extent to which students are engaged in school and signs of school withdrawal. The purpose of the "connect" component is to respond on a regular basis to students' educational needs. Targeted students receive basic interventions and students exhibiting high-risk behaviors receive additional intensive interventions. The manual provides information on identifying students at risk of dropping out, including a table of risk factors. The role of the monitor, the person responsible for helping a student stay connected to school, is explained. "Check" procedures are reviewed, with definitions given for indicators and criteria for high risk students. Discussion of "connect" procedures focuses on such strategies as giving students regular feedback, discussing the importance of school, providing academic support, and solving problems. Interventions are suggested which are specific to each risk factor. Common implementation barriers are identified with recommended solutions. Strategies for enhancing the procedure and indicators of success are suggested. Appendices include monitoring sheets, an "Economics of Staying in School Fact Sheet," a "Five-Step Plan Worksheet," and a contract form. (Contains 23 endnotes.) (CR)

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Keeping Kids in School

Using Check & Connect for Dropout Prevention

Prepared by

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Part 1 What is Check and Connect?

About This Manual

This manual was written for educators who work with youth at high risk for dropping out. It describes Check and Connect, a procedure for keeping kids in school. Check and Connect is based on the assumption that effective dropout prevention must focus on indicators of school engagement and early warning signs of school withdrawal, such as chronic absenteeism or course failures. While the Check and Connect procedure was developed for high-risk urban students at the secondary level, much of the information here is applicable to elementary age youth and families.

Part 1 provides an overview of the Check and Connect procedure and a brief rationale for implementing dropout prevention interventions. Parts 2 through 5 describe how to implement the Check and Connect procedure, beginning with strategies on how to identify students at high risk for dropping out. Parts 6 and 7 include options for addressing common implementation barriers and for enhancing family and school support systems. Results from the field test of the Check and Connect procedure and suggestions about evaluating your own efforts are presented in Part 8.

The Check and Connect Procedure

The Check and Connect monitoring and school engagement procedure is a tool that can be used by school personnel to maintain students' engagement with school. The monitoring system has two components:

- ***Check:*** The purpose of this component is to systematically assess the extent to which students are engaged in school or, conversely, are exhibiting signs of school withdrawal.
- ***Connect:*** The purpose of this component is to respond on a regular basis to students' educational needs according to their type and level of risk for disengagement from school. All targeted students receive basic interventions. Students showing high-risk behaviors receive additional intensive interventions.

Interventions directed at preventing students from dropping out may focus on the individual needs and personal development of the student, on empowering families to provide educational support to their adolescents, or on making changes in the school or district to keep youth engaged in school. Although the primary focus of this manual is on interventions for individual students, several suggestions are presented for working with families. Also discussed are some of barriers you may encounter, such as school policies that alienate students from school.

How Check and Connect Was Developed

In 1990, the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), made a five-year commitment to fund three projects for the development, refinement, and assessment of dropout prevention and intervention strategies. The projects were established under a program competition called "Dropout Prevention and Intervention Programs for Junior High School Students in Special Education"

which specifically targeted adolescents with learning and emotional/behavioral disabilities. Priority was given to program designs that used a collaborative approach across the spheres of home, school, and community.

The three funded projects were located in Los Angeles, Minneapolis, and Seattle. While all the projects focused on home, school, and community spheres of influence, and used a person to monitor each student's affiliation with school, the Check and Connect procedure described here developed from the Minnesota project.

In Minneapolis, parents, educators, community members, and students contributed to the development of the initial grant proposal and to planning interventions. Intervention strategies that were implemented focused on both the individual needs of the students and on building competencies within families and schools. The Minneapolis project was based on four assumptions: a) leaving school prior to graduation isn't an instantaneous event, b) solving the dropout problem will require a multicomponent effort of home, school, community, and youth, c) students must be empowered to take control of their own behavior, and d) schools must be designed to reach out to families in partnership with the community. The Check and Connect monitoring and school engagement procedure evolved out of these assumptions.

Students who were in the Check and Connect monitoring and school engagement procedure for three years – in grades seven to nine – were twice as likely to be on-track for graduation as their peers in a comparison group.[1]

■ *Why Worry About Dropouts?*

Dropping out of school prior to graduation isn't a new phenomena in the United States. In 1900, two decades after the passing of mandatory school attendance laws, only 4% of American youth were graduating from high school.[2] While nearly a century later national figures indicate that on average over 85% of all secondary students finish high school,[3] dropout rates remain disproportionately higher for some American youth. For example, 45% of low income Hispanic American youth don't complete high school, nor do 24% of low income African American youth, or 37% of youth with disabilities.[4] In large urban school districts, the problem is even greater. Without accounting for socioeconomic status, the four-year dropout rate in the Chicago public schools is approximately 45% and Los Angeles has a 33% rate.[5]

The four-year dropout rates for students who have disabilities is significantly higher than the national average of 12 percent:[6]

- 37% of all students with disabilities;
- 36% of students with a learning disability;
- 55% of students with an emotional or behavioral disability.

Key Features of Check and Connect

- ***Preventive:*** Focuses on risk factors that can be altered through intervention.
- ***Builds capacity:*** Promotes the acquisition of skills and successful school habits.
- ***Efficient:*** Builds upon existing resources and networks within systems of home, school, and community.
- ***Outreach:*** Structured to create long-term trusting connections between schools, youth and families.
- ***Individualized:*** Systematically focuses on the individual needs of high-risk youth.
- ***Adaptable:*** Uniquely designed to incorporate the goals and strengths of a local community.

The consequences of dropping out and, subsequently, the importance of a high school education for later success have increased significantly since the turn of the century. Viable employment options no longer exist for individuals without a high school diploma. The costs and consequences associated with dropping out are significant both for individual students and society as a whole. Youth who don't complete high school are more likely to experience unemployment, underemployment, incarceration, and long-term dependency on social services.

Unemployment rates for school dropouts are as much as 40% higher than for youth who have completed high school.[7] Among youth with disabilities, 65% of those who graduate are employed in competitively paid positions three to five years out of school compared to 42% of similar youth who have dropped out.[8]

Dropouts are two to four times more likely than graduates to be arrested just a few years after leaving school.[9] Approximately 75% of youth involved with the juvenile court system have dropped out of school, and four out of every five federal prisoners in the United States have not completed high school.[10] The estimated annual cost of providing for dropouts and their families is $76 billion per year or approximately $800 annually per taxpayer.[11]

Thinking about who drops out and why they drop out is a critical part of the process of identifying students who are at risk for dropping out of school. Youth drop out for a variety of reasons. When students are asked, they report:

- Problems getting along with teachers
- Getting suspended or expelled
- Unfair discipline policies
- Bad grades
- Not liking school
- Peers dropping out
- Inability to get into desired programs
- Pregnancy and/or teenage parenthood
- Need to support family by working or providing day care to younger siblings[12]

Although most educators would like to be able to provide individualized support to all students, resources and time are often scarce and must be used wisely. Finite resources need to be allocated in the most efficient and effective manner. Important questions for educators to consider are:

- What is the best way to identify students at risk for dropping out?
- Of the many factors associated with school withdrawal, which ones are the most powerful and accurate predictors?

Two types of predictors associated with dropping out of school can be characterized as either status risk factors or alterable risk factors.[13] School-based efforts to promote school completion should focus on alterable risk factors.

Status risk factors are defined as historical or demographic characteristics of the student, family, peers, school, or community. They are often used to classify large groups of individuals or communities. While most data on the dropout issue focus on demographic characteristics, status variables aren't readily amenable to change, if at all.

Alterable risk factors are defined as the behaviors or practices of the student, family, peers, school, or community that are predictive of dropping out. They are more powerful predictors of students' exit from school than status variables.[14] More importantly, alterable risk factors are by definition amenable to intervention by educators, youth advocates, parents, and students. Some of the most powerful predictors are student behaviors that are directly indicative of school withdrawal, such as, chronic absenteeism, problem behavior, or course failures.[15]

For a more detailed list of these risk factors, please see Table 1 on the opposite page.

The next question that may arise concerns which alterable risk factors should be used to identify students. The short answer is "all of them." Researchers have found that negative outcomes aren't necessarily associated with the presence of one particular risk factor in the youth's background. Rather, they are a result of the total number of risk factors that influence mental health status, scores on intelligence tests, the development of behavioral disorders, and educational outcomes.[16]

Generally speaking, the more risk factors a student confronts, the more likely she or he is to experience poorer developmental outcomes and to disengage from school. A recent follow-up of students in eighth grade indicates that dropping

out of school occurred nearly eight times more often among students with multiple risk factors compared to their peers with no risk factors.[17]

Multiple risk isn't equal to failure. Many students who experience multiple risk factors are able to succeed and complete high school successfully. In addition to risk factors, students may have one or more protective factors, like a caring and concerned adult in their lives, above average intelligence, or a supportive peer group. These types of factors may act as buffers against the effects of risk factors such as living in a violent neighborhood or growing up in poverty.

■ *Criteria for Selection*

When determining which students to target for prevention and intervention efforts, it's important to consider the distinction between status and alterable risk factors. It's recommended that students be targeted for intervention based on the alterable risk factors that most directly indicate student levels of engagement with school:

- Tardiness
- Skipping classes
- Absenteeism
- Behavior referrals to the office
- Detention
- In-school suspension
- Out-of-school suspensions
- Failing classes (*prior to ninth grade*)
- Behind in credits (*beginning in ninth grade*)
- History of dropping in and out
- Not completing assignments
- Low expectation to graduate
- Frequent number of school moves

Table 1 · Risk Factors Associated with Dropping Out of School

	Status Risk Factors	*Alterable Risk Factors*
Student	• Ethnic/racial minority • Disability • Of legal age to drop out	• Absenteeism • Course failure • Disruptive behavior
Family	• Lower socioeconomic status • Single-headed household • Residential mobility	• Limited monitoring • Lack of supervision • Low trust
Peers	• Older in age • Out of school • History of criminal activity	• Teenage parenthood • Substance abuse • Low expectation to graduate
School	• Large school building • Overcrowded • Current financial difficulties	• Out-of-school suspensions • Administrative transfers • Limited parent outreach
Community	• Urban or rural • Southern or western region • Recent economic hardship	• Underdeveloped networks • Inaccessible support services • Limited resources

Please note: This table is not meant to provide an exhaustive list, but to provide a framework for thinking about the risk factors associated with dropping out.

- No interest in school
- Social isolation
- Grade retention

Select students who have recently displayed these warning signs withdrawal. Use the criteria of high risk described in Part 4, *Definitions of Indicators and Criteria for High Risk*, to determine what frequency or intensity constitutes high-risk behavior. If information isn't available on all of these indicators of risk, use a combination of at least three of the following four alterable indicators: absenteeism, out-of-school suspensions, and failing classes or credits (depending upon the student's grade level).

Be sure not to overlook those students who are passively withdrawing from school – failing to turn in assignments, not participating in class or in extracurricular activities – and quietly fading away.

3 The Role of the Monitor

Building a connection between students and school personnel is an essential component of dropout prevention strategies. The person responsible for helping a student stay connected to school is referred to as the monitor. As part of the Check and Connect procedure, relationship building between the monitor and the student is based on the adult's familiarity with the student and his or her educational progress. Trust and familiarity are developed over time through ongoing efforts like checking on students' attendance or grades, providing regular feedback to students, communicating regularly with families, and initiating efforts to keep the youth engaged in school. It's also developed via informal connections such as checking in with the student on a regular basis about her or his perceptions of how school is going.

Monitoring procedures are necessary for students who are at risk for dropping out of school. First, monitoring provides a systematic and efficient way to connect disengaged students with immediate interventions. Second, monitoring provides an essential link to the student's educational performance.

The primary goal of a monitor is to prevent the student from slipping through the cracks. This is accomplished in part by using individualized intervention strategies and helping the student develop habits of successful school behavior. Some examples of typical strategies used by a monitor include:

- Talking to teachers to gather and share information about student progress
- Contacting parents by phone or by making home visits to share information and develop a plan to re-engage students in school
- Talking with students about their academic progress and what assistance they think is needed

These examples illustrate the importance of communication among key stakeholders. Other common strategies, like the ones below, focus on accessing services for students:

- Arranging for tutoring services
- Writing contracts with students, teachers, and parents to develop alternatives to disciplinary actions that might lead to withdrawal
- Providing students and their families with information about community services and agencies

The monitor also assists the student and the student's family in finding ways to constructively navigate through the secondary system, as well as helping families learn strategies for reducing the student's risk of dropping out.

Many different people can serve as monitors, including teachers, case managers, university graduate students, community advocates, school psychologists, and others. What is required from a monitor are the following skills and attitudes:

- Persistence
- Belief that all kids have abilities
- Willingness to work closely with families, including parents and any other significant person in the student's life
- Advocacy skills, including good communication skills and the ability to negotiate, compromise, and confront conflict

The length of time a monitor works with a student ideally will continue across several years. In the best-case scenario, the monitor works with the same case load of students through graduation, moving with the students and families from program to program. In essence, the monitor would work for the school district rather than be associated with one particular school, treatment program, or correctional facility.

For urban secondary students who are accustomed to learning from a new set of teachers every year or even every grading period, the continuity provided by a monitor is reassuring for the student and provides an informative resource for teachers trying to meet the needs of high-risk students. Of course, this scenario isn't always possible. When it isn't, arrangements that promote consistency, continuity, and persistence are desired.

It's important to note that some students in a monitor's case load may already be connected with an adult in the school – a coach, a specific teacher, or some other adult in the building. The monitor's role isn't to replace established relationships, but to work with that adult to support the student's engagement with school and progress toward school completion.

Part 4 "Check" Procedures

Checking students' connection with school is the strategy used to monitor indicators of risk. Check student levels of engagement with school regularly – daily or at least weekly. The level of engagement is measured by monitoring alterable risk factors such as absenteeism, suspensions, and course failure. The degree of a student's risk for dropping out is based on the number of incidents per month within each risk category.

■ *Indicators of Risk*

This section contains a list of observable warning signs or risk factors that indicate a student is beginning to withdraw from school. We recommend monitoring these eight indicators of risk:

- Tardiness
- Skipping
- Absenteeism
- Behavior referrals
- Detention
- In-school suspension
- Out-of-school suspension
- Failing classes/Behind in credits

For each risk factor, a definition and the criteria for identifying a student's risk status is provided in this section. The level of risk is used to determine which level of intervention to deliver: *basic* or *intensive*. These levels are described in Part 5, *"Connect" Procedures*.

Briefly, every student identified for participation in the Check and Connect procedure is assumed to be "at risk" for dropping out and in need of basic intervention. For students exhibiting high risk on one or more of the indicators, intensive intervention should be implemented promptly.

The criteria presented in this manual were established by a task force of middle school administrators, teachers, and project staff, all of whom were working with students in grades seven and eight in an urban school district. A monitoring sheet is used to document a student's progress, as shown in Figure 1 on the following page. Note by the checks on the right side of the sheet that the student was at high risk for tardies and suspensions, but not for any of the other indicators of school engagement. Patterns in student risk can be assessed quickly by examining the summary boxes of "high risk for the month" over time.

It will be helpful, if not necessary, to review and modify these risk criteria in the context of your school. For example, high schools generally have higher expectations for appropriate behavior than middle school settings. Therefore, a low number of behavior referrals to the office may reflect low risk in eighth grade, but high risk in ninth grade. A copy-ready monitoring sheet can be found in Appendix A.

■ *Definitions of Indicators and Criteria for High Risk*

Tardiness

Tardiness is defined as arriving late either for school or for class.

High Risk	Five or more incidents per month
Strategies	*Basic:* see pages 12–16 *Intensive:* see pages 13–16

Skipping

Skipping is defined as missing selected class periods within a day without an excused reason.

High Risk Three or more incidents per month

Strategies *Basic:* see pages 12–15
Intensive: see pages 13–16

Absenteeism

Absenteeism is defined as a full day's absence for excused or unexcused reasons. Days when the student is absent for out-of-school suspensions should be included here.

High Risk Three or more incidents per month

Strategies *Basic:* see pages 12–15
Intensive: see pages 13–16, 17

Behavior Referrals

Behavior referrals are defined as being sent to administrative or resource staff for inappropriate behavior.

High Risk Four or more referrals per month

Strategies *Basic:* see pages 12–15
Intensive: see pages 13–16, 17

Detention

Detention is defined as a consequence for inappropriate behavior for which the student "owes" time either before or after school. The student is often required to perform some custodial function on the school grounds, to complete school work, or at least to sit quietly.

High Risk Four or more incidents per month, depending on the school

Strategies *Basic:* see pages 12–15
Intensive: see pages 13–16, 17

In-School Suspension

In-school suspension is defined as a consequence for inappropriate behavior for which the student spends the school day(s) in a separate area or classroom of the school building. The student is typically supervised and required to participate in a structured activity, such as completing homework, participating in school maintenance projects, or sitting quietly.

High Risk Two or more incidents per month, depending on the school

Strategies *Basic:* see pages 12–15
Intensive: see pages 13–16, 18

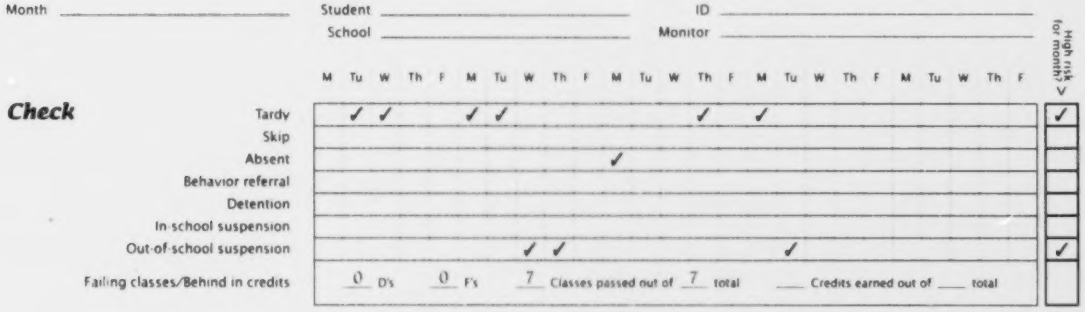
Out-of-School Suspension

Out-of-school suspension is defined as a consequence for inappropriate behavior for which the student spends a defined number of school days at home. The student isn't allowed on school property for the suspension period.

High Risk Two or more days suspended per month

Strategies *Basic:* see pages 12–15
Intensive: see pages 13–16, 18

Figure 1 · Monitoring Sheet [top half]



Failing Classes

Failing classes is defined as receiving a grade of F or D in any class.

High Risk One or more F and/or two or more D's per grading period

Strategies *Basic:* see pages 12–15
Intensive: see pages 13–16, 19

Behind in Credits

Being behind in credits is defined as failing to earn enough credits to be on track to graduate in four or five years.

High Risk Earning less than 80% of the possible credits per grading period

Strategies *Basic:* see pages 12–15
Intensive: see pages 13–16, 19

Prioritizing Checks

If resources aren't available for you to monitor these risk factors, you should consider checking the following:

- Absenteeism
- Out-of-school suspension
- Failing classes (*prior to ninth grade*)
- Behind in credits (*beginning in ninth grade*)

A copy-ready modified monitoring sheet can be found in Appendix B.

5 "nnect" rocedures

Two levels of student focused interventions are recommended. Basic strategies are presented first, followed by a description of intensive strategies. A quick reference guide to intensive prevention and intervention strategies specific to each risk factor is also presented on pages 16 through 19. The delivery of intervention is guided by the "Check" portion of the monitoring sheet, which portrays the number and type of risk factors exhibited by the student (see Figure 1). Notice in Figure 2 on the opposite page that this student received basic interventions and intensive intervention for high risk associated with tardiness and suspensions. Recording intervention activities helps to assess the effectiveness of responses to student risk.

All students, regardless of risk, should receive basic interventions on at least a monthly basis. Intensive interventions should be implemented immediately for students exhibiting high risk.

■ *Basic Strategies*

The following four basic interventions should be administered to all students targeted for dropout prevention interventions, regardless of their present level of engagement with school. The basic interventions use minimal resources to keep potential dropouts connected to school, particularly after a working relationship has been established between the monitor, student, and caregivers.

Share General Information About Check and Connect

Share general information with the student about the monitor's role and the purpose of the monitoring sheets. Provide information to the student's parents or primary caregiver about the monitor's role.

Give Students Regular Feedback

Give students regular feedback about their overall progress in school and in relation to specific risk factors. Based on a student's needs, the amount of feedback should be individually determined (at least monthly, preferably weekly). Praise students for improvements or continued success in various aspects of their school performance, for example, attendance or grades. Or, let students know that you are concerned about their connection to school, for example, being tardy to class or incomplete homework assignments. The monitoring sheet should be reviewed with the students so that they can have a concrete, visual representation of their progress.

Regularly Discuss the Importance of Staying in School

Ask each student directly about the importance of staying in school. Share more information with the students – add "facts" to the student's responses about the economics of staying in school (see the fact sheet in Appendix C). Some sample "facts" about dropping out include:

- Students have to attend regularly to do well in school.
- Dropouts earn an average of $60 a week less than high school graduates (emphasize that this is equivalent to a new pair of sneakers).
- During a lifetime, dropouts will earn approximately $200,000 less than those who complete high school.

- Students who drop out of school can still earn a high school diploma by re-enrolling in school or earning a GED diploma.

Monthly Problem-Solving About Indicators of Risk

Problem-solve with students about indicators of risk and staying in school. Guide students through real or hypothetical problems using a cognitively oriented problem-solving five-step plan like the procedure outlined below:

- Step 1: *Stop! Think about the problem.*
- Step 2: *What are some choices?*
- Step 3: *Choose one.*
- Step 4: *Do it.*
- Step 5: *How did it work?*

Each month, discuss a different indicator of risk. For example, review the attendance risk factor by discussing the consequences of skipping school or by generating together lists of strategies students use to get to school every day. Structure the conversation around the five-step plan or a similar problem-solving procedure of your preference. A copy-ready five-step plan and worksheet can be found in Appendix D.

Intensive Connection Strategies

Additional interventions can be administered for students showing high risk in relation to any of the nine risk factors being monitored. The intensive connection strategies are divided into three areas: academic support, problem-solving, and recreational and community service exploration. All of the following strategies have been implemented by Check and Connect staff with secondary students.

Academic Support

- Connect students with a tutor-mentor. Possible resources include tutoring services offered by the school; older or more advanced students; neighborhood or community agencies; colleges and universities where students must often complete practica or internships.
- Develop individualized academic contracts. For example, a teacher or monitor and a student could negotiate that if the student hands in all homework assignments for a predetermined amount of time, the student can earn a reward of his or her choice. Tips for contracts include keeping it *simple* (focusing on only one or two target tasks), *positive* (stating the

Figure 2 · Monitoring Sheet [bottom half]

Connect

	Shared general information	Provided regular feedback	Discussed staying in school	Problem-solved about risk
BASIC				
		✓	✓	
	✓	✓		

	Arranged for alternative to suspension	Contracted for behavior or grades	Communicated with parents	Made special accommodations	Participated in community service	Participated in school-sponsored activity	Participated in social skills group	Worked with tutor or mentor	Other: _____
INTENSIVE									
	✓								
	✓	✓	✓						
		✓							

Please note: These "Connect" interventions correspond to the student risk factors in Figure 1.

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tasks in terms of what the student will do), *realistic* (making sure the student is capable of reaching the goal), and *collaborative* (involving the student in determining the task, reward, and the time involved to achieve the goal). A copy-ready contract can be found in Appendix E.

- Assist teachers in making accommodations for students who are struggling. Allow more time to complete assignments. Arrange for the student to take tests with an aide or special educator. Give the student the same work but fewer problems to complete.

Problem-Solving

- Facilitate student social skills groups. Co-facilitate with another colleague – this provides great modeling opportunities for students and is a lot more fun! Possible resource materials include *Skill Streaming the Adolescent,*[18] *The Prepare Curriculum,*[19] *Building Social Problem Solving Skills.*[20]
- Facilitate family problem-solving meetings. Suggestions for making family meetings more successful include providing a meal (doesn't have to be fancy but this is an excellent ice breaker and conversation flows more freely over food); providing child care for younger siblings (one inexpensive way is to hire several of your students whose families will be attending); providing transportation (bus tokens, cab fare, or providing rides); holding meetings in a centrally located place other than the school. Funds may be available from a variety of sources to support family problem-solving meetings: school parent-teacher organizations, a business partner, church groups, or community service organizations. Some school districts have resources available for transportation to school functions.
- If family problem-solving meetings aren't feasible, consider home visits to provide families with problem-solving information.
- Hold immediate problem-solving sessions with students regarding high-risk behaviors. Structure the conversation around the five-step plan. An example of such a conversation is illustrated on the opposite page.
- Develop individualized behavior contracts. For example, a teacher or monitor and a student could negotiate that if the student completes a predetermined number of school days without behavior referrals, the student can earn a reward of his or her choice. Tips for contracts include keeping it *simple* (focusing on only one or two target tasks), *positive* (stating the tasks in terms of what the student will achieve), *realistic* (making sure the student is capable of reaching the goal), and *collaborative* (involving the student in determining the task, reward, and the time involved to achieve the goal). A copy-ready contract can be found in Appendix E.
- Explore alternatives to out-of-school suspension. Possible alternatives include in-school suspension, Saturday school, several detentions, prohibiting the student from participating in athletics or other extra-curricular activities, and family mediation services.

Recreational and Community Service Exploration

- Facilitate youth involvement in after-school activities.
- Learn about existing programs that are offered through community organizations, such as your Parks and Recreation Department, YMCA, YWCA, religious organizations, Boys and Girls Clubs, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, or community education.

  Try to enhance student access to existing programs, rather than duplicate these programs. Check to make sure students and parents know about existing programs. Arrange transportation. Get waivers for participation fees. Take the student to the first session of the activity or make arrangements for another person to accompany the student to the first session. Follow up – ask the student how things are going; help solve any problems that might interfere with the student's ongoing participation.
- Establish a community service tutoring program or find existing programs. For example,

An Illustration of a Five-Step Plan Conversation

Monitor I notice you had quite a few absences this past month. In fact, you were absent eight days out of twenty. I think it's a problem. What do you think?
Student Yeah, it's a problem.
Monitor Why is being absent so often a problem?
Student Well... I could fail my classes.
Monitor Right. Why else?
Student I won't learn anything.
Monitor Right again. Now tell me why it's important to stay in school.
Student Because you learn stuff you need to know for your future. And you need to graduate.
Monitor Right again! I'm glad you see the importance of staying in school. Remember that besides learning important things, a diploma helps you get a better job – one that pays more than if you dropped out. Let's see if we can figure out how to improve your attendance using the five-step problem-solving plan we've used before. What's the first step?
Student Say the problem.
Monitor Yes, and so what's the problem?
Student I don't come to school enough.
Monitor OK. What are some choices to help you come to school more often?
Student I could get my brother to wake me.
Monitor So, part of the problem is you don't get up in the morning... OK, what's another choice?
Student I could ask my mom to make sure I get up and go to school.
Monitor Good idea. How about one more idea – it's important to think of three ideas in case the first two don't work out.
Student I don't know... I could just go to school.
Monitor Right, but how would you do that? If getting up is a problem, then asking someone to wake you is a good idea. What about going to bed at night? Do you get enough sleep?
Student I'm usually pretty tired. I get to bed kind of late.
Monitor Maybe then you could think of a solution that relates to going to bed.
Student Well, I could go to bed earlier.
Monitor OK – great. You have three choices. Let's look at each one to decide which would be the best choice. If you asked your brother to wake you in the morning, would that work?
Student Yeah, he usually gets up when I do to get ready for school.
Monitor Do you think he'd do it?
Student I guess...
Monitor OK. How about your second choice – asking your mother to make sure you get up and go to school?
Student Well, she's usually already at work when I get up. But she could call me from work.
Monitor Do you think she'd do that?
Student I don't know. She might forget.
Monitor How about the third choice? The one about going to bed earlier so you're not so tired.
Student Yeah, I could do that.
Monitor OK – now that we've discussed all three, choose one idea that you think will work best to solve this problem.
Student I could talk to my brother and see if he'll get me up.
Monitor OK, but I have one more idea for you. Do you have an alarm clock?
Student No – only my mom does.
Monitor Well, what if I got you an alarm clock and that way your brother would just have to make sure you get up after it goes off?
Student OK.
Monitor Will you still be tired in the morning?
Student Probably. I should go to bed early too.
Monitor Well, how about if you try going to bed early and using the alarm clock for now. And we'll talk next week to see if it worked. And *then* we can decide if you want to try another solution.
Student OK, but when will I get the clock?
Monitor I'll drop it off tomorrow and we'll talk the same time next week to see how it's going.
Student Alright.
Monitor Good luck and good work solving your problem.

one of the middle schools where Check and Connect was implemented was located next to a pre-school program. Project and school staff applied for a small grant and developed a tutoring program whereby the middle school students with disabilities tutored pre-school children several times per week.

Other possible resources include leadership programs through the YMCA or YWCA, Americorps, city-wide park agencies, or after-school programs.

- Help students arrange for summer jobs or other structured summer activities. Possible resources include city- or state-wide youth agencies or employment counselors at schools. Assist students in completing applications. Help students obtain needed documents such as birth certificates and social security cards. Role play interview sessions with the student and review "dress codes." Provide bus tokens for public transportation to interviews.

Quick Reference

The following are suggestions for interventions specific to each risk factor on the monitoring sheet. These lists aren't intended to be exhaustive, but rather to provide guidance and spark creative responses based on the unique needs of your students and the context of your setting.

Tardy to School

- Contact the student's parents or guardians if tardiness occurs more than once or twice in one month.
- Communicate regularly with parents or guardians about the student's progress so they can participate in reinforcing the student for getting to school on time.
- Does the student have an alarm clock? If not, purchase one for the student. If so, does the student know how to use it? Demonstrate if necessary. School social workers or school psychologists may have discretionary funds or community agencies may be able to support these types of efforts.
- Determine with the student why he or she is late to school.
- Develop a plan with parents to set a reasonable bed time. Use the five-step plan to structure your conversation.
- Provide a reward system or develop a contract with the student for being on time.
- Record or chart days on time with the student or have the student self-monitor.
- Check busing logistics – where and when does the bus stop; does the student know this; does the student need passes for public transportation?

Tardy to Class

- Determine with student why he or she is late for class.
- Make sure student knows how much time it takes to get from one place to the next and knows where the next class is located.
- Use a timer (or a watch) to help student get to activities or classes at a specific time.
- Have a peer accompany the student.
- Give the student a class schedule to be signed by teachers to document promptness.
- Provide a reward system or develop a contract with the student for being on time.
- Record or chart days on time with the student, or have the student self-monitor.
- Contact parents or guardians if the student misses more than one or two classes.
- Communicate regularly with parents or guardians about the student's progress so they can participate in reinforcing the student for getting to class on time.

Skipping

- Determine which classes the student skips. Is there a pattern? What supports the pattern?
- Inform parents or guardians and to ask for their assistance in solving the problem. If there is no phone at home, make a visit.
- Develop a contract with the student based on the number of classes attended.

- Provide a reward for attending a certain number of classes. Provide an unscheduled reward. For example, if you "catch" the student in class, give him or her an immediate reward like a $1.00 gift certificate to a favorite fast-food restaurant. (Remember: intermittent rewards are the most effective).
- Determine with student why he or she is skipping. Is class too easy or difficult?
- Inform the student and parents about attendance laws.
- Welcome the student subtly when he or she comes to class to avoid embarrassing him or her in front of peers.
- Communicate with parents so they can reinforce class attendance.
- Allow student to be social at appropriate times; peers may be a good motivator for attending class.
- Have student keep records of the classes he or she attended.
- Explain the relationship between attendance and grades and its correspondence to working and collecting a paycheck.

Absences

- Call parents or guardians if the student has more than one or two absences a month. If there is no phone at home, make a home visit.
- Determine whether something at home is more rewarding for the student than coming to school.
- Maintain regular communication with family or guardians. This will encourage two-way sharing of information about progress and will provide families way to be involved in the reinforcement of appropriate behaviors.
- Develop a plan with parent and students to improve attendance.
- Does the student need an alarm clock? A wake-up call? A ride to school?
- Does the student need to go to bed earlier in the evening?
- Develop a contract for certain number of days attended and provide a reward.
- Record or chart days present with the student or develop a self-monitoring system.
- Welcome the student subtly when he or she comes to school to avoid embarrassing him or her in front of peers.
- Explain the relationship between attendance and grades and its correspondence to working and collecting a paycheck. Encourage family members to do the same.
- Provide unscheduled rewards. For example, if you "catch" the student in class, give him or her an immediate reward like a $1.00 gift certificate to a favorite fast-food restaurant.
- Help the student develop friendships that might encourage him or her to come to school more often.
- Involve the student in a different and exciting project, one for which the student can be a successful contributor (for example, peer tutoring with younger students).

Behavior Referrals and Detention

- Assign a peer to work with the student to model appropriate classroom behavior.
- Communicate with parents to keep them informed of progress and to enlist their help in developing a plan of action.
- Ask parents if they'd be interested or willing to provide consequences to their child – positive, negative, or both.
- Intervene early when there is a problem to keep the situation from escalating to the point of sending the student to the office or giving him or her detention.
- Give the student a cue or signal when he or she starts engaging in inappropriate behavior.
- Develop a contract with the student specifying what behavior is required. Specify rewards and consequences.
- Reward the student for achieving contract goals and also reward student at unscheduled times for appropriate behavior.

- Help students use the five-step plan for solving problems to use during the office referral and to prevent referrals in the future. Repeat as necessary.
- Plan activities so that the student doesn't have a lot of unstructured time.
- Frequently reinforce a student who acts appropriately in the classroom.
- Try various student groupings to determine those situations where the student can maintain appropriate behavior.
- Establish classroom rules. Repeat the rules frequently and reinforce students for following rules. The students may be able to help develop appropriate classroom rules.
- Inform the student about changes in routine or schedule, such as for holidays.
- Give the student a monitoring sheet for each class with three to five expectations, thereby providing the student with tangible feedback about her or his performance. Let the student discuss his or her perceptions of progress.
- Communicate to the student that public displays of sexually related behavior are inappropriate.
- Model appropriate behaviors for the student. Don't yell or threaten, etc.
- Teach the student to recognize the initial signs of becoming engaged in inappropriate behavior. This will assist in self-monitoring.
- Create a classroom atmosphere that is pleasant and safe for you and students.
- Minimize materials or equipment so there aren't extra items to distract the student.
- If possible, provide the student with a place to store property and require students to store property when not in use.
- Teach the student acceptable and appropriate ways of communicating when he or she is frustrated, angry, or unhappy.
- Check to be sure that you aren't inadvertently reinforcing the student for inappropriate behaviors (for example, attending to the student only when acting out).
- Monitor the number of behavior referrals, detentions, and the causes – is there a pattern?
- Structure detention sessions so that the student is required to do something constructive (for example, complete assignments or work on challenging classes).

In-School Suspension

- Interventions used for in-school suspensions will be much like those used for out-of-school suspensions.
- Structure in-school suspensions so that the student is required to do something constructive (for example, complete late or missed assignments).
- Require the student to participate in a corrective procedure based on her or his behavior (for example, removing graffiti or cleaning bathrooms if the student damaged school property, writing a report about something related to the offense).

Out-of-School Suspension

- Learn the reason for suspension by talking with the student or staff.
- Contact parents to clarify the school's reason for the suspension and to discuss the student's response.
- Get assignments from teachers for the time the student will be out of school.
- Talk with the student about reason for the suspension and problem solve regarding what could be done differently next time.
- Require re-entry meetings for students and parents returning from suspensions to discuss plans to prevent reoccurrence.
- Provide transportation for the student and his or her family for a re-entry meeting.
- Develop a contract with the student and provide rewards for successful completion of the contract.
- Make appropriate referrals (for example, if a student is suspended for using drugs, make connections with a chemical dependency counselor; if referred for involvement with

gangs or guns, involve a police liaison officer at the school or in your community).

Failing Classes or Behind in Credits

- Arrange tutoring for the student. Possible resources include tutoring services offered by the school; older or more advanced students; neighborhood or community agencies; colleges and universities where students often have to complete practica or internships.
- Pair students in the classroom for assignments or projects.
- Develop an individual academic contract with the student and provide a reward for successful completion.
- Communicate regularly with parents or guardians so they are informed and can participate in supporting the student.
- Determine whether parents need suggestions, resources, or support for helping with learning at home and, if so, provide it.
- Talk with student about the reason for failing grades – is it due to lack of effort, or is the work too hard or too easy?
- Connect with the student's teachers regarding their perceptions about why the student is failing.
- Problem solve with the student about ways to improve grades. Use the five-step plan to help structure your problem solving.
- Support the student in talking with her or his teacher regarding steps that could be taken to improve grades.
- Determine whether the student possesses necessary classroom skills such as asking for help, study skills, waiting appropriately for teacher attention.
- Assist teacher in making accommodations for students who are having difficulty (for example, more time for completing assignments, taking tests with a teaching aide).
- Provide rewards for effort (for example, free homework day, class party, or other rewards that emphasize social reinforcers rather than tangible or material reinforcers).
- Problem solve with the student about ways to negotiate with teachers to earn credits by the end of the grading period.
- Explore with a vocational coordinator or employment counselor possibilities for a student to earn credit for outside employment.
- Explore summer school programs or after-school programs for opportunities to make up missing credits.
- Review with ninth graders how the credit system works. Sit down periodically with the student (e.g., after each grading period) to discuss his or her credit status and progress.
- Convene an IEP team meeting to determine whether the student will earn enough credits to graduate or whether the student would rather earn a diploma or certificate of completion by fulfilling his or her IEP goals and objectives.

Barriers to implementation are almost always encountered when starting any new system or intervention strategy. Mobility, ineffective communication between home and school, punitive discipline policies, and administrative transfers are four common barriers encountered by Check and Connect project staff.

As you begin to implement the Check and Connect procedure, it's likely that you will discover both strengths and weaknesses unique to your own school or district. The following lists are intended to provide suggestions for addressing some of the barriers you may encounter.

■ *Mobility*

Student mobility is strongly related to dropping out of school. Every time a student moves to a new school, learning routines and Individualized Education Programs (IEP) are disrupted. Residential moves are also challenging in that effective and ongoing communication with families is often interrupted due to changing addresses or phone numbers. In addition, bus service may be disrupted and may interfere with student attendance.

Suggestions for addressing student mobility center around preparing the student, her or his family members, and the new school for a move. They include:

- Be sure records are transferred to the new school.
- Speak with the student's case manager or special educator to prepare for the transition.
- Talk with the student about his or her new school.
- Try to arrange busing in advance to prevent any unnecessary absences.
- Try to attend a meeting with the student, her or his family, and the new school staff.

■ *Ineffective Communication Between Home and School*

Regular communication between parents or other family members and educators can minimize the potential for negative school experiences among high-risk youth. Collaboration and trust are based upon two-way sharing of information and multiple opportunities for dialogue. It's clear that the possibilities for misunderstanding are infinite. Prior to secondary school, parents have been accustomed to interacting with one teacher for their child's academic needs. Parents must now contact seven teachers instead of one in order to monitor their child's academic progress. Teachers are now responsible for communicating with over a hundred parents instead of thirty-five and communicating among their colleagues regarding those hundred-plus students – and all in a timely fashion.

Suggestions for addressing home-school communication are proposed from the perspective that the school will initiate the "conversation" with parents. They include:

- Call parents or caretakers on a regular basis, not just when there are problems.
- Write notes to parents or caretakers to let them know what's happening in school. Make all written communications available in the first language of the family; use fairly simple language to assure that parents who aren't

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strong readers will be able to read the notes.

- Make home visits regarding students' educational progress.
- Make home visits at least once a year for a positive reason. Home visits show parents that school staff can function outside the school environment and are interested in meeting with them in their environment, not just at school. Parents respect these efforts and this can result in parents and students trusting and communicating with educators.
- Find out whether parents need suggestions, resources, or support to be able to help with student learning at home. If anything is needed, help to provide it.
- Directly invite parents or caretakers to be partners. Let them know they are important in helping their child stay in school and be successful in school.
- Work with other school staff (e.g., social workers or psychologists) and community supports to offer parent education classes or workshops on topics identified by families as important (e.g., what to expect from your tenth grader, developmental issues for teens).

■ *Punitive Discipline Policies that Inhibit School Engagement*

Strict adherence to rigid discipline policies may exacerbate the dropout problem. Students report that incidents of out-of-school suspension are one of the primary reasons for dropping out. Dropouts consistently hold more negative perceptions about the effectiveness and fairness of school discipline. One obvious hazard of sending a student home is that it directly impedes that youth's opportunity to attend school and to engage in the learning process. Furthermore, it doesn't use suspension as an opportunity to dialogue about changes in a problem-solving fashion. Educators find themselves operating in a reactive mode – responding to the immediate demands of misconduct and student-teacher power struggles spurred on by unmanageable classroom behaviors, overcrowded schools, high mobility rates, and fear.

Suggestions for addressing discipline practices and policies focus on the consideration of students' particular circumstances and the adaptation of standard procedures. They include:

- Establish a procedure so that a teacher or other designated person who knows the student is aware of and is able to address potential suspensions.
- Be sure to notify parents or guardians when a student is going to be suspended.
- Provide alternative consequences. Possibilities include Saturday school; several detentions; suspension from activities.
- If it's necessary to suspend, use in-school suspensions. They are less disengaging than out-of-school suspensions.
- Find out if the student has an IEP. If so, is it appropriate for the student's needs? For example, if a student has behavior needs, does the IEP have goals and objectives that address behavior or is a behavior plan in place?

■ *Administrative Transfers*

In some school districts, school administrators handle discipline problems by transferring students to other schools. This practice usually results in schools swapping students with challenging behaviors rather than addressing the behaviors that get students into trouble. On rare occasions, administrative transfers can be part of an effective behavior plan, but they must include a structured plan for helping the student change his or her behavior in the new setting and for addressing how school personnel react to the behaviors. Other suggestions include:

- Find out if the student has an IEP or has been assessed for special education services. If the student is being considered for an transfer, has the team ruled out the possibility that the student's behavior may be a result of a disability such as an emotional disability or learning disability? To make this determination, an assessment may be needed.
- Negotiate for alternatives to administrative transfers (if preferred by student and family).

Part 7 Strategies for Enhancing the Procedure

Using other available resources – specifically families and community members and agencies – is one way that Check and Connect staff have been able to broaden the scope of services offered to students at risk of dropping out of school. The following are suggestions for involving parents or other family members as partners in the monitoring and intervention process, as well as suggestions for collaborating with relevant community agencies.

■ *Parents as Partners*

- Install a homework hotline. Set up an answering machine (or establish voice mail boxes) and record messages about homework for the week and upcoming school events.
- Make home visits when you can't reach a parent by phone.
- Support parent volunteer and guest lecturers from the community to discuss issues of mutual interest to families and educators (for example, youth development; talking with students about homework).
- Hire parents to work collaboratively with teachers to complement the role of the teacher and to illustrate to students parental support of school. Possible roles for parents in schools include: assisting in a classroom, working as a hall or building monitor, administrative assistant, lunchroom support, tutoring individual students, and providing reinforcement and support to students. Hiring parent or family workers will require close teaming with administration and other supportive staff. It may be possible to write a proposal for a small grant or seek financial support through a business or community partner.
- Facilitate parent-teacher action research teams as a systematic way to enhance home-school collaboration and at the same time address salient problems. The purpose of these teams is to address concerns about student performance across home and school contexts. A select group of parents and teachers generate concerns, develop solutions, and evaluate their effectiveness in regularly scheduled meetings over the course of one or more school years.
- Help parents earn their General Education Development (GED) certificate. Possible resources include community education centers, alternative schools, and community resource directories.
- Provide parents with a variety of options for involvement – be creative and ask parents and families what they'd like to do! For example, parents could help with homework at home, be involved in leadership roles on advisory boards, or could be involved with an extracurricular activity.
- Strengthen classroom and building-level policies and practices that welcome and encourage family involvement (for example, one-hour conferences which are held several times throughout the year, pathways of communication that foster frequent communication between home and school).
- Discuss with parents how they want to be involved in the monitoring system.

■ *Community Partnership Ideas*

- Collaborate with local or city park programs. Contact park administrators and suggest activities (for example, basketball or double-dutch jump rope).
- Connect with nonprofit neighborhood organizations like YMCA/YWCA, Boys and Girls Clubs, or service organizations like Serve America. Check your local community resource guide for agencies in your area.
- Network with community organizations, human service agencies, and individual professionals. Ideas include county agencies (e.g., youth outreach workers); city organizations (e.g., mayor's office); Big Brothers or Big Sisters; and chemical dependency groups and agencies. Approach individuals you know about the possibility of tutoring or mentoring youth. Check your local community resource guide for other possibilities.
- Access computer-aided instruction. Ideas include individualized tutoring or teaching programs; programs for parents or other adults to prepare for and earn a GED; discourse communication system, Computer Curriculum Corporation (CCC) system, or other vendered software and hardware instructional packages. Provide opportunities for students to access and become comfortable with technology like PC's, e-mail, Internet).
- Use business partnerships. Approach local businesses about funding large or small ongoing activities. (A hint: present all ideas in writing). Approach businesses for mentors, tutors or even one-time presentations.
- Apply for small grants from your school district, state agencies, local organizations, or foundations. Check whether your district has a support person to help coordinate or facilitate grant writing activities or can provide you with suggestions for looking for funding.

Part 8 Indicators of Success

■ Results of the Check and Connect Field Test

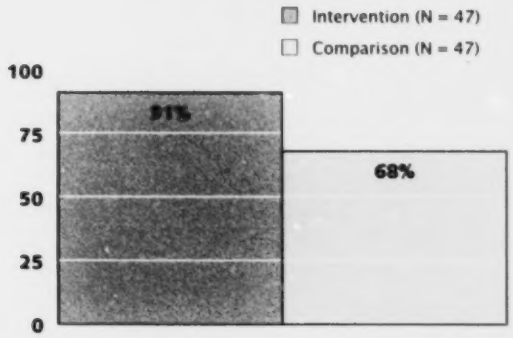
The Check and Connect procedure was developed for, and field tested with, a group of urban adolescents with learning and emotional/behavioral disabilities. We began working with these students and their families in 1992, beginning in seventh grade. At the end of ninth grade, significantly more students who were targeted for the Check and Connect intervention were enrolled in school and on track to graduate.

The students who received intervention from grades seven through nine were more likely to be enrolled at the end of ninth grade than similar students in the comparison group who did not receive intervention (see Figure 3).[21]

The students who received intervention from grades seven through nine were more likely to be on track to graduate (i.e., earning at least eighty percent of all possible credits by the end of ninth grade) than similar students in the comparison group who did not receive intervention (see Figure 4).[22]

More information about the effectiveness of the Check and Connect procedure and the original project can be found in the ABC publication *Staying in School: A Technical Report of Three Dropout Prevention Projects for Middle School Students with Learning and Emotional Disabilities.*[23]

Figure 3 · Percentage of Students Enrolled in School

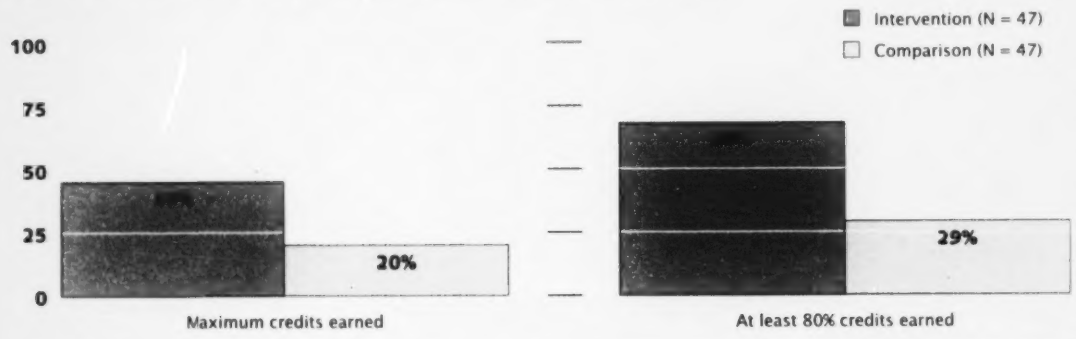


■ Evaluating Your Efforts

The "Check" part of the Check and Connect procedure provides the basic information that can be used for program evaluation purposes. You may want to summarize the data from the monitoring sheets for your school building, school district or for any agencies or organizations who helped to support your efforts.

Depending on the extent of resources available, you may also want to keep track of what happens to similar students who don't have the benefit of the Check and Connect procedure. The comparison information will allow you to assess the net effect of the dropout prevention and intervention efforts. While we recognize that allocating scarce resources toward evaluation efforts may be difficult, you may want to explore the possibility of obtaining volunteer services from an evaluator.

Figure 4 · Percentage of Students On Track to Graduate



Appendices

29	*Appendix A*	*Check and Connect Monitoring Sheet*
31	*Appendix B*	*Modified Check and Connect Monitoring Sheet*
33	*Appendix C*	*Economics of Staying in School Fact Sheet*
35	*Appendix D*	*Five-Step Plan Worksheet*
37	*Appendix E*	*Contract Form*

Appendix A · Check & Connect Monitoring Sheet

Month _____ Student _____ ID _____

School _____ Monitor _____

	M	Tu	W	Th	F	M	Tu	W	Th	F	M	Tu	W	Th	F	M	Tu	W	Th	F	High risk for month? √
Check																					
Tardy																					
Skip																					
Absent																					
Behavior referral																					
Detention																					
In-school suspension																					
Out-of-school suspension																					
Failing classes/Behind in credits	____ D's ____ F's ____ Classes passed out of ____ total ____ Credits earned out of ____ total																				
Connect																					
BASIC																					
Shared general information																					
Provided regular feedback																					
Discussed staying in school																					
Problem-solved about risk																					
INTENSIVE																					
Arranged for alternative to suspension																					
Contracted for behavior or grades																					
Communicated with parents																					
Made special accommodations																					
Participated in community service																					
Participated in school-sponsored activity																					
Participated in social skills group																					
Worked with tutor or mentor																					
Other: _____																					

Appendix B · Check & Connect Monitoring Sheet [modified]

Month _____ Student _____ ID _____

School _____ Monitor _____

		M	Tu	W	Th	F	M	Tu	W	Th	F	M	Tu	W	Th	F	M	Tu	W	Th	F	High risk for month? √
Check	Absent																					
	Out-of-school suspension																					
	Failing classes/Behind in credits	____ D's ____ F's ____ Classes passed out of ____ total ____ Credits earned out of ____ total																				
Connect	***BASIC***																					
	Shared general information																					
	Provided regular feedback																					
	Discussed staying in school																					
	Problem-solved about risk																					
	INTENSIVE																					
	Arranged for alternative to suspension																					
	Contracted for behavior or grades																					
	Communicated with parents																					
	Made special accommodations																					
	Participated in community service																					
	Participated in school-sponsored activity																					
	Participated in social skills group																					
	Worked with tutor or mentor																					
	Other: _____																					
	Other: _____																					
	Other: _____																					
	Other: _____																					
	Other: _____																					

Appendix C • Fact Sheet: The Economics of Staying in School

- National Education Goal 2 is "By the year 2000, the high school graduation rate will increase to at least ninety percent." Its objectives include:
  - The nation must dramatically reduce its dropout rate, and seventy-five percent of those students who do drop out will successfully complete a high school degree or its equivalent.
  - The gap in high school graduation rates between American students from minority backgrounds and their non-minority counterparts will be eliminated. (*National Education Goals Panel, 1991*)
- Students don't drop out of school overnight. Dropping out is a long process of disengaging or disconnecting from school both physically and mentally. (*Finn, 1989, 1993*)
- When students are asked why they drop out of school, their reasons include problems getting along with teachers, getting suspended or expelled, unfair discipline policies, bad grades, not liking school, peers dropping out, inability to get into desired program, pregnancy and teenage parenthood, and the need to support family by working or providing day care to younger siblings. (*Ekstrom, et al., 1986; Fine, 1986; Wagner, et al., 1991; Wehlage & Rutter, 1987; Wheelock, 1986*)
- Twenty percent of adults over the age of twenty-five in the United States have not completed high school. (*Bureau of the Census, 1994*)
- Thirty-seven percent of all youth with disabilities drop out of high school. Fifty-nine percent of students with an emotional/behavioral disability drop out of high school. Thirty-six percent of students who have a learning disability drop out of high school. (*Wagner, et al., 1992*)
- Dropouts earn an average of $60 a week less than high school graduates. (*Nichols & Nichols, 1990*)
- During their working lives, dropouts will earn approximately $200,000 less than those who do complete high school but do not attend college. (*Nichols & Nichols, 1990*)
- The annual cost of providing for dropouts and their families is more than $76 billion a year. For every taxpayer, that means about $800 a year in taxes. (*Joint Economic Committee, 1991*)
- Eighty percent of federal prisoners have not completed high school. (*Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1995*)
- Of youth with emotional/behavioral disabilities who have dropped out, seventy-three percent have been incarcerated within three to five years after leaving school. (*Wagner, et al., 1992*)
- Students with special needs who receive tutoring, personal counseling or take vocational training classes are less likely to drop out of school than their peers matched for similar characteristics who did not receive additional support. (*Wagner, et al., 1991*)
- Students who drop out of school can still earn their high school diploma by re-enrolling in school or earning their GED diploma. The likelihood of returning to school is greatest in the first two years after dropping out. (*National Center on Educational Outcomes, 1992*)
- Approximately seven percent of candidates for GED diplomas have a disability. (*Baldwin, 1991*)
- Attendance is a powerful predictor of school success – students need to be in school in order to learn and do well in school. (*Frazer & Ligon, 1991; Hess, 1989*)

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Appendix D ▪ Five-Step Plan Worksheet

1 Stop! Think about the problem.

2 What are some choices?

3 Choose one.

4 Do it.

5 How did it work?

Appendix E ▪ Contract Form

I _____ *agree that* _____
student's name target behavior

is important so that I can learn and be prepared for my future.

If I _____ *for the next* _____,
target behavior time interval

I will earn _____
reward

from _____.
person

_____
Student

_____
Date

_____
Monitor

_____
Date

_____
Parent/caregiver

_____
Date

_____
Educator/school staff

_____
Date

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[22] These results are reported for the sub-sample of cohort 2 intervention and comparison students who are continuing to participate in the research and intervention project through high school. Analyses revealed significant results: In four years, 45% (N = 21/47) the intervention group vs. 20% (N = 9/45) of the comparison group, c2 (1) = 6.30, p = .01; In five years, 68% (N = 32/47) of the intervention group vs. 29% (N = 13/45) of the comparison group, c2 (1) = 14.53, p = .0001.

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